

## Healthy Options at HAAM

Food pantry food tends to be pretty predictable: rice, beans, canned meats and vegetables, and endless boxes of macaroni and cheese. Inexpensive, easy to cook, non-perishables dominate the landscape. Whatever is donated that week is what a food pantry can distribute to families in need. And while HAAM is incredibly grateful for those donations, they tend to mirror what families can afford to purchase at the food store. Unfortunately, these items do not provide the type of nutrition that all families would ideally have access to.

“We know that families avoid hunger by choosing cheaper, more filling foods,” said Program Director Ester Valladares. “There is a very important conversation to be had about food insecurity versus hunger. A lot of our families have enough to eat with the help of the food pantry, but the food they have access to is not ideal.”

Particularly for growing children or people with or at-risk of chronic conditions such as heart disease or diabetes, food matters. It fosters more than just healthy physical growth. Good nutrition helps children focus at school, participate in pro-social activities and sports, and build lifelong healthy habits. For adults, a diet rich in vegetables and healthy proteins can help avoid or manage conditions like diabetes that are costly or can make it difficult to work.

This year, when much of the Lake Houston Area is reeling from Hurricane Harvey, a silver lining has emerged: HAAM has secured funds to purchase some food to distribute to families. Pantry Director Jenniffer Gisclair explained, “as part of the Hurricane Harvey relief money raised by Mayor Turner and Judge Emmett, we have been blessed with funds to provide food for those impacted by the storm. We are using that money to buy healthy options such as leafy greens, lean meats, fresh produce, eggs and dairy



products, and low-sugar canned goods, sugar substitutes and nutritional drinks for those with diabetes.”

“I feel really good about giving this food to our families,” said a very happy Jan Retherford. Jan is a Case Manager at HAAM and not only does she see clients at the front desk, she also works in with them in both the Education Program and the Employment Program. Jan has seen firsthand, during her years at HAAM, how important it is to build up the whole family in order to help them break the cycle that has brought them into HAAM in the first place.

HAAM thanks the Greater Houston Community Foundation, administer of this grant, for allowing HAAM to purchase healthy foods for families in our area. To learn more about HAAM or to [donate](#), visit us at [www.haaministries.org](http://www.haaministries.org).